

REMARKS

Applicants thank the Examiner for the very thorough consideration given the present application.

Claims 1-15, 21-27, and 30-34 are now present in this application, of which claims 1 and 26 are independent. By this amendment, claims 28 and 29 have been canceled, without prejudice or disclaimer, and claims 11, 26, and 30 have been amended.

Because Applicants believe that the rejections of at least claims 1-10 were improper, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of these rejections, as well as the remaining rejections.

Reasons for Entry of Amendments

At the outset, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered into the Official File in view of the fact that the amendments to the claims automatically place the application in condition for allowance. In addition, Applicants believe that the rejections of at least claims 1-10 were improper.

If the Examiner does not agree that this application is in condition for allowance, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered for the purpose of appeal. This Amendment reduces the issues on appeal by rewriting independent claim 11 to depend from independent claim 1 and amending independent claim 26 to include the subject matter of dependent claims 28 and 29.

This Amendment was not presented at an earlier date in view of the fact that Applicants did not fully appreciate the Examiner's position until the Final Office Action was reviewed.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103

Claims 1, 7-15, and 21-34 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Tanigawa; claim 2 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tanigawa in view of Muhr; claims 3, 4, and 6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tanigawa in view of Kwok; and claim 5 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being

unpatentable over Tanigawa in view of Kwok as applied to claim 3, and in further view of Gafner. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Complete discussions of the Examiner's rejections are set forth in the Office Action, and are not being repeated here.

While not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to advance prosecution of the instant application, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 28 and 29 have been canceled, thus rendering portions of this rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) moot. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

Tanigawa discloses a bellow hose 61a, a circulating pump 57, a nozzle 59, and a conduit between the circulation pump 57 and the nozzle 59. These elements are for circulating wash water. First, the wash water stored in the tub is drained through the bellow hose 61a and pumped by the circulation pump 57. Then the pumped wash water flows through the conduit and is sprayed into a drum. In other words, the water, which is pumped by the circulation pump 57 and flows through the conduit, is in a liquid state. Therefore, the conduit disclosed in Tanigawa is a water transporting conduit.

However, according to claim 1, the mist generating device converts water to mist. It is apparent from the claim that the water means water in a liquid state. First, the mist generating device converts water to mist. Then, the mist is transported through the mist transporting conduit. Finally, the mist is delivered to the drum through the outlet of the mist transporting conduit. Herein, the mist means a large number of tiny drops of water in the air. Therefore, the mist generated by the mist generating device is transported through the mist transporting conduit and then is delivered to the drum through the outlet of the mist transporting conduit.

Tanigawa does not disclose the above-described feature. Rather, Tanigawa discloses a water transporting conduit and a spray nozzle 59, which sprays the water delivered from the water transporting conduit. Therefore, Tanigawa does not disclose the mist transporting conduit having an inlet and an outlet, the inlet being connected to the mist generating device, and the outlet arranged to deliver mist to the drum. As such, Tanigawa cannot teach transporting mist generated from the mist generating device and delivering the mist to the drum.

Furthermore, as required by claim 8, a steam generating device is installed at the mist transporting conduit and supplies the steam into the drum. As noted above, Tanigawa discloses elements for circulating water for washing laundry. Tanigawa also discloses a bellow hose 61b, a duct 49, a fan 41, a duct 42, and a hot air blower port 45. These elements are for drying laundry. In other words, these elements are for circulating a drying air. The Office Action states that these elements (steam generator) convert the mist into steam because air, which contains water vapor, enters the steam generator from the drum, and as it is heated, the remaining water vapor is converted into steam.

Applicants submit that these elements are not for generating steam as set forth in claim 8. The air, which contains water vapor, is cooled in the duct 49 and water in the air is condensed in the duct 49. See col. 11, lines 20-27. Therefore, these elements are not a mist generating device, rather they are a vapor eliminating device and an air heating device. After condensing, even though the air contains small amounts of water vapor, the air is heated to 120 °C and provided to the drum for drying the laundry. In other words, the air is heated to further evaporate moisture from the laundry. It is clear that the drying cycle and the washing cycle are independent from each other in Tanigawa. Therefore, Tanigawa does not disclose all the features set forth in claim 8.

According to claim 26, a mist generating device and a steam generating device are provided at a circulation line and are dependent on each other. In other words, at the circulation line, the mist generating device generates mist from the circulated water and the steam generating device generates steam from the mist. However, in Tanigawa, the elements for circulating water and the elements for circulating drying air are independent of each other. Therefore, Tanigawa does not disclose the circulation line at which both the mist generating device and the steam generating device are provided.

None of the other references relied on by the Examiner are directed at overcoming the deficiencies noted above with regards to Tanigawa. Therefore, independent claims 1 and 26 are allowable for the reasons set forth above.

With regard to dependent claims 2-15, 21-25, 27, and 30-34, Applicants submit that these claims depend, either directly or indirectly, from one of independent claims 1 and 26, which are allowable for the reasons set forth above, and therefore these claims are also allowable based on

their dependence from one of claims 1 and 26. Reconsideration and allowance thereof are respectfully requested.

With regards to the Examiner's interpretation of "atomizing means" and "diffusion nozzle", claim 7 requires that the diffusion nozzle be located at the outlet of the mist transporting conduit while the mist generating device is located at the inlet of the mist transporting conduit. Therefore, the diffusion nozzle and the mist generating device cannot be the same.

With regards to the Examiner's position regarding Official Notice, while the structures may be known, obviousness cannot be established by Official Notice. Therefore, Applicants have not conceded that it would be obvious to replace the nozzle of Tanigawa with any structure identified by the Examiner as showing features of "an atomizer."

Additional Cited References

Since the remaining references cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject the claims, but have merely been cited to show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

Office Action

The Office Action contains numerous characterizations of the invention, the claims, and the related art, with which Applicants do not necessarily agree. Unless expressly noted otherwise, Applicants decline to subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action.

CONCLUSION

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and as such, the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone Chad D. Wells, Registration No. 50,875, at (703) 205-8000, in the Washington, D.C. area.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment is respectfully requested.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Dated: February 29, 2008

Respectfully submitted,

By 

James T. Eller, Jr.

Registration No.: 39,538

BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

8110 Gatehouse Road

Suite 100 East

P.O. Box 747

Falls Church, Virginia 22040-0747

(703) 205-8000

Attorney for Applicants

CDW